



MWACOP News Notes

Midwest Area Council for Office Professionals

May 2019 Issue

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Message from the Co-Chairs

Welcome to the new PSAs in the MWA. It is nice to have new faces and we are sure the Research Units appreciate having the PSAs. We would encourage you all to reach out to your Mentors for any questions, guidance and assistance. Know that the members of the MWACOP are also available.

MWACOP held our annual meeting May 14th through May 16th in Peoria. We reviewed our Charter and set new goals for the upcoming 2019-2020 year. The Council accomplished the revamping of the mentor program for new PSAs. We structured it to be a Team Mentor program vice a single mentor. Another accomplishment and priority of the Council was to review every item and link in the SOP manual (you can find the link to the manual on our web page <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/MWA/Pages/MWACOP.aspx>). We are currently working to update the SOP manual so if you find something that needs our attention, don't hesitate to send us an email. It is a great resource and we strive to keep it current.

MWACOP welcomed three new members (Marci Bushman is in Ames, IA; Ann Champion and Kerri Bentley are in Columbia, MO).

NACOP requested that each Council provide research items to the attendees at the upcoming NACOP Training Workshop in July. Be sure to stop by the MWACOP display and pick yours up when you are in Norman, Oklahoma.

As always, we are here, as a Council, to help you, the Office Professional. If you have a question or just need some support, do not hesitate to contact any one of us.

Best wishes,

Kelli Adkins, Sr. Co-Chair and Jessica Boyer, Jr. Co-Chair

Members of the council include:

Kelli Adkins (Kelli.Adkins@usda.gov) - Sr. Co-Chair

Jessica Boyer (Jessica.Boyer@usda.gov) - Jr. Co-Chair

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Deborah Schaefer (Deborah.Schaefer@usda.gov) - Technical Advisor/NACOP Representative

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Sherri Buxton (Sherri.Buxton@usda.gov) - Sponsor



MWACOP Website

<https://axon.ars.usda.gov/MWA/Pages/MWACOP.aspx>

MWACOP SOP Website

<https://www.ars.usda.gov/midwest-area/docs/sop-manual/>



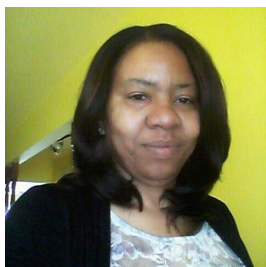
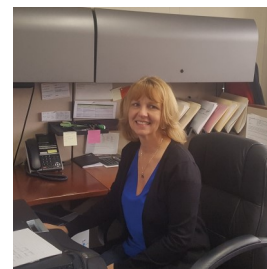
NACOP Website

<https://axon.ars.usda.gov/Inside%20ARS/NACOP/Pages/NACOP.aspx>



Welcoming New Office Professionals to MWA

As most of you may know, there is a new permanent face in the Area Office. **Tracy Durre** is the Administrative Support Assistant. Tracy began her journey as a HACU Intern and was chosen for a position with ARS in the Midwest Area Directors Office. Tracy's time as a HACU intern gave her a chance to build a solid foundation and it did not take long for her to determine that she wanted to transition from an internship to a career. In her new capacity as an Administrative Support Assistant, she is looking forward to adding to her current knowledge and developing new relationships as well as building on those that she has created throughout the past year. Tracy is also excited about new training opportunities. Tracy finds the work done at ARS to be both fascinating and rewarding and is excited and proud to be a part of the agency.



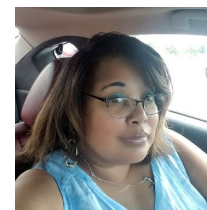
Pamelita Edwers joined the Cell Wall Biology and Utilization Research Unit in Madison, Wisconsin, in February. Pam has prior service in the U.S. Army where she served on active duty for five years. Between her military career and life as a military spouse Pam has spent time in Stuttgart, Germany, and Ismir, Turkey. In 2011, Pam accepted a position with the Department of Veteran's Administration in Wisconsin. Pam is looking forward to learning new things in her position. Pam is working towards her Associate's Degree in Business Management and is currently taking online classes. When she has free time, Pam enjoys knitting afghans, reading and spending time with her two grandchildren who live in Wisconsin. She keeps in touch with her other five grandchildren via FaceTime.

Brian Brusky joined the Dairy Forage Research Unit in Madison, Wisconsin, as a PSA in February. Brian came to ARS from the Air Force where he served as a Federal police officer at McConnell AFB, Kansas. Before that he was in the Army. His career with the military took him to Fort Riley, Kansas; Fort Knox, Kentucky; Fort Benning, Georgia; South Korea; Egypt; Bosnia; Kosovo; and Herzegovina (Macedonia). Brian grew up in Wisconsin so relocating to Madison brought him closer to family. In his spare time, Brian enjoys the outdoors, bowling and following his daughter's softball games. Brian and his wife have two children: a daughter (15) and a son (2).



Robin Meester joined the National Animal Disease Center, Deputy Center Director's Office in Ames, Iowa, in April. Robin came to ARS from APHIS where she was an Office Assistant and the International Clerk for Foreign Orders for Diagnostic Virology lab. Robin and her husband Ed have four children. They have nine grandchildren ranging from 3 to 19 years old. Robin enjoys shopping for items to turn into yard art, as well as gardening, bird watching, golfing, bowling and hitting the road on their Trike with her husband.

Christina "Tina" Collins is the new PSA for the Renewable Product Technology Unit in Peoria, Illinois. Tina is originally from Paducah, Kentucky, but has lived in Peoria for 40 years with her husband and two children. Tina has had a career in the OB/GYN Offices for OSF and private practices. In her spare time, Tina enjoys gardening and traveling. In the meantime, she is hoping for grandchildren sometime in the near future.



Renee Montgomery is the new PSA for Ruminant Diseases and Immunology Research Unit located in Ames, Iowa. Even though this is Renee's first position as a federal employee, she has 25 years previous experience as Director of Casino Finance. Prior to that, she lived in Colorado where she was a Firefighter/EMT-IV, Secretary/Accountant and served as part of the Drug Enforcement Team for the U.S. Olympic Committee Sports Medicine Division in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Renee currently lives in Ames, Iowa. She has two children and six grandchildren. She loves to travel, quilt and take long adventurous trips with her grandchildren.

ARS Retirement—Kim Meyers



Kim Meyers began her career with the USDA-ARS-Vegetable Crops Research Unit in Madison, Wisconsin in September of 2003. During the past 16 years, Kim has exemplified what it means to be an outstanding Program Support Assistant.

Kim has always been willing to step up to new challenges and to take on additional responsibilities to support others within the Midwest Area. During her tenure she has mentored seven new Secretaries/PSAs, two Office Automation Assistants, 2 Pathways students, 2 HACU students and numerous new SYs and Technicians.

From August 2007 to June 2013, Kim was a member of the former Program Administrative Task Group (PASTG), which is now the Midwest Area Council for Office Professionals (MWACOP). While on the Council, she was elected as the Co-Chair and served in both the Junior and Senior Co-Chair roles. During her tenure on the Council, Kim was integral in restructuring the PASTG into the MWACOP as well as helping to organize two Secretary/Program Support Assistant Conferences for all MWA PSAs/Secretaries.

The Area continued to draw on her leadership throughout her career as she served on hiring committees for Administrative Officers, Technicians, Office Automation Assistants, Grants Management Specialist and numerous Program Support Assistants.

In 2009, Kim was selected as the MWA Office Professional of the Year in recognition of her outstanding achievements and leadership to the MWA.

Kim was recently asked if she had any words of wisdom that she would like to share with new people starting with ARS or something that she wishes she would have known prior to starting her career with ARS. Here's what she had to say:

Don't be afraid to try something new and have fun with what you're doing!

A wise woman once told me that I wasn't going to break ARIS and she was right ... I never did!

Participate in the trainings and workshops that are offered. It's not only what you learn during the training, the people you meet can be an invaluable resource for you.

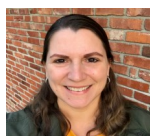
I have really enjoyed my 15 plus years as the Program Support Assistant for the Vegetable Crops Research Unit, being a part of the Madison location, and the Midwest Area. I have met some incredible people that have truly impacted my life. I'm extremely happy that I will be spending more time with my family but will sure miss the day-to-day with my work family.

Kim is looking forward to spending more time with her family. She will continue volunteering at her granddaughter's school and will also spend more time on herself learning about life outside of ARS.

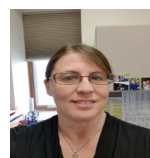
A very special, THANK YOU and CONGRATULATIONS is extended to you, Kim, for all your hard work and dedication to the Agricultural Research Service, Midwest Area and the Vegetable Crops Research Unit.



Look Who is New to the MWACOP!



Ann Champion is the Program Support Assistant at the Cropping Systems and Water Quality Research Unit in Columbia, Missouri. She has been with the agency since June 2004. As a new member to the Council, she would like to see better communication and networking among ARS administrative support staff.



Marci Bushman is the Program Support Assistant at the North Central Regional Plant Introduction Station in Ames, Iowa. She has been with the agency since 2005. As a returning member to the council, she would like to see more office professionals taking advantage of the resources made available by the MWACOP, whether through more promotion of the resources or by making the resources more user friendly.



Kerri Bentley is the Program Support Assistant with the Plant Genetics Research Unit in Columbia, Missouri. She has been with the agency since 2009. As a new member of the Council, she would like to see more communication take place among the ARS administrative staff and administrative professionals as well as continuing to make resources readily available and easily accessible to all Office Professionals.

We look forward to working with you all!

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ARMPS March—August 2019

- * What you can do to get ready:
 - * Start an ARMPS folder.
 - * Refresh yourself with what you did last year.
 - * Ask your travelers what meetings they plan to attend in FY-20 (domestic & foreign).

Annual Reports May—August 2019

- * What you can do to get ready:
 - * Review FY-18 annual reports to familiarize yourself with the required material.
 - * Know where to find the Annual Report Manual. FY-19 instructions have already been sent out by HQ.
 - * Ensure 115 information is updated and citations are in the correct format.

Weekly or Regular Basis

- * Back up computer on a regular basis.
- * Monitor supplies and order as needed.
- * Reconcile credit card transactions within Access Online [AXOL] and CATS.

Bi-weekly

- * T&A's (send email to Unit of submission deadline).
- * Update REE Directory or send information to person responsible for updates.

Monthly

- * Monitor required AgLearn Training.
- * Reconcile Status of Funds as needed or required.
- * Check ARIS to monitor progress of manuscripts, check for any 416/417's, Agreements which will be terminating and need to be extended or will require reports. Request necessary reports from SY's.
- * Review citations—follow agency guidelines for format. Check the volume/page numbers along with the DOI.

Quarterly

- * Pull Detail by Author (115) Reports for Scientists
- * Quarterly performance reviews. Update PAD.

MWA OP of the Year—Kelli Adkins



Ms. Kelli Adkins was selected as the 2019 Midwest Area Office Professional of the Year in recognition of her exemplary efforts in support of the Forage-Animal Production Research Unit in Lexington, Kentucky, the Midwest Area (MWA) Director's Office in Peoria, Illinois, and her leadership on the Midwest Area Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity Council (DEOC) and the Midwest Area Council for Office Professionals (MWACOP).

Ms. Adkins serves the Forage-Animal Production Research Unit in Lexington, Kentucky. The Unit is housed in a non-federal facility located on a University campus. Ms. Adkins serves as the Unit's official representative to the building emergency committee. She coordinates many day-to-day functions with the University. Through these interactions, the University of Kentucky has learned that they can rely on Ms. Adkins to provide them with prompt and accurate information.

The Unit is the only ARS presence at the Location, and the Unit does not have a local Administrative Officer (AO). Thus, Ms. Adkins is the Unit's first stop for administrative support with questions on budget, performance and other administrative functions that are beyond the scope of her program support responsibilities. No matter what the task, she is always there to make it come together. This year was especially challenging because the Research Leader (RL) of five years retired. Ms. Adkins worked closely with multiple Acting RLs to make sure that deadlines were met and provided guidance on how to do the various duties tasked of the RL. On her own, she pulled together the location's ARMPS package and worked with the Acting RLs so that they understood what was needed for this document. Her expertise in this arena has been invaluable. She is constantly walking the Acting RLs through the functions of their role and helping to guide those serving.

In April of 2018, the Executive Assistant to the Director of the MWA retired from her position and the MWA was left with no permanent clerical staff. The Area Leadership reached out to Ms. Adkins to ask if she would be willing to serve as the point of contact for the RPES process for the MWA. The RPES duties include proofreading and providing input to strengthen the cases of the Category 1 scientists. Kelli works closely with the Associate Director, the scientists up for panel review, their supervisor, and the Unit Program Support Assistant to make sure that the best representation of the scientist's case is provided for review. Ms. Adkins also worked closely with the Associate Director to review the FY-19 schedule and to confirm that the RPES Panelist chosen for panel service were able to serve. This effort was a coordination of reviewing potential panelists, confirming their participation and in those instances where a replacement panelist needed to be found, she worked with the Area and Headquarters RPES staff to find a suitable panelist to serve. The impact of her RPES service was invaluable in maintaining the high level of review the MWA scientists have become accustomed in receiving and the timely delivery of high-quality cases to the Headquarters RPES staff.

Ms. Adkins is a known commodity within the Area and has been solicited to serve on various committees and leadership roles. Ms. Adkins is serving her second term in representing the two Kentucky locations, Bowling Green and Lexington, on the MWA Diversity and Equal Opportunity Council. She currently serves as the editor of the Council's newsletter, MEDLEY, that is published approximately three times a fiscal year. The MEDLEY is a tool used to promote equal opportunity and celebrate diversity throughout the MWA locations. This newsletter is distributed throughout the Midwest Area and to Headquarters EEO Staff. Ms. Adkins also serves as the recording secretary for the Council maintaining minutes, coordinating the monthly meetings and assisting in the development of the monthly agendas. The impact of her work on the MWA DEOC Committee aids in promoting and supporting our workplace values.

Ms. Adkins also serves as the Senior Co-Chair of the MWACOP. She has been an active member on this council since the Kentucky locations joined the Midwest Area in FY 2015. Ms. Adkins brought a wealth of diverse knowledge to the group with her previous experience serving as a member of the former, Mid-South Area Council. The MWACOP is tasked with improving communication, awareness and skills to enhance teamwork and promote excellence and to share resources to improve professional development through training and mentoring for the Office Professionals in the MWA. This year, under Ms. Adkin's leadership and direction, the MWACOP was able to revamp the mentoring program by creating a "team" approach in mentoring new employees. New guidelines have been developed and the process was updated. Under her direction, the Council created the PSA/Secretary Orientation Handbook for Onboarding Employees at the PSA/Secretarial level. This tool was distributed to the MWA Office Professionals in April 2018. Ms. Adkins was also instrumental in developing the MWACOP News Notes which were distributed in October and April of this fiscal year.

Ms. Adkin is a liaison between the Research Unit, University partners, and a conduit between a remote Administrative Officer and Unit staff. She is an active member on multiple Area committees and an employee that can be called upon for special assignments. Her outstanding support has allowed the MWA to continue to support the scientists with their RPES case materials. Her leadership within the two MWA councils has exemplified what it means to be a valued ARS employee. She has accomplished all of this while maintaining a high-level of performance at the Lexington Kentucky location during a transitional period.

NACOP Update

Submitted by: Beth Burmeister & Deborah Schaefer

There are so many things to tell you about the National Advisory Council for Office Professionals (NACOP).

NACOP is excited to announce that the Training Workshop received final approval. The theme of the training workshop is "NACOP 25+ Years Strong: Accomplished, Resourceful and Successful (ARS)." The event will be held on July 16-18, 2019, in Norman, Oklahoma.

Since the last NACOP update in the fall issue of News Notes, Cathy Lonaberger, Technical Advisor, and Paula McEvoy, Headquarters Representative, both retired. Dawnetta Hauth, Representative from the Pacific Area, resigned to accept an Administrative Officer position. Collette Wood was selected to serve as technical advisor and Candance Moore as the Headquarters representative.

As an outcome of the Year of the RL, the advisory group planning team requested NACOP to nominate Official Professionals to serve on each of the AFM Functional Advisory Groups. Three of the five Advisory Groups are represented by Midwest Area Office Professionals: Facilities, Engineering, Real Property and Safety (Debi Schaefer); Homeland Security (Lori Burma); and Human Resources (Beth Burmeister). Participation on these advisory groups speaks highly of the administration's support of NACOP and the importance of office professional representation on these committees.

NACOP is developing a Quick Reference Guide (QRG). This will be a resource that is posted on Axon for links to the official guidance for each topic. The QRG is being edited for final revisions.

These are just a few of the exciting things that are happening with NACOP. If you have a question or concern for NACOP, please reach out to either Beth Burmeister or Debi Schaefer. We are here to represent you!



Resist Phrases that Mar Your Image

Submitted by: Amy McNamara

Even casual remarks can enhance your professional image or harm it. So, think before you speak, and make statements that highlight capabilities, not weaknesses. Let's look at some phrases to avoid:

"I'm too busy/I don't have time/I'm just swamped."

Although you may be telling the truth, no one wants to hear about your backlog. You'll come across as someone who can't control their time. **Solution:** Consult your calendar and say, "Let me reserve a time to take care of that for you. I can complete it..."



I'm having one of those days/Things are crazy here/You've caught me at a bad time."

These lines have practically lost their meaning. Other people are under pressure too and are more concerned about what they need than the reasons why you can't deliver. **Solution:** Resist the urge to complain. And, again, offer a reasonable time line for getting the work done.

"I put a call in to them/I'm waiting to hear back."

Bosses would like more from you than a wait-and-see approach. **Solution:** Try to avoid getting caught in a "reactive mode," where you can do nothing until calls are returned. Call until you establish contact or get the information your boss needs. Or if someone will not return your call, talk to his or her assistant or someone in the department.

"Don't quote me on that/You didn't hear this from me."

Such statements imply that you are about to provide information that you should keep to yourself. That's hardly a professional image to present. **Solution:** Assume that anything you say will be attributed to you. And remember, people respect those who can keep confidences.

"We'll see how it goes/I'll try my best."

No matter how earnest you sound, those comments make it sound like you are leaving yourself out. **Solution:** Commit to what you know you can deliver with a strong statement like, "I'll take care of it for you."